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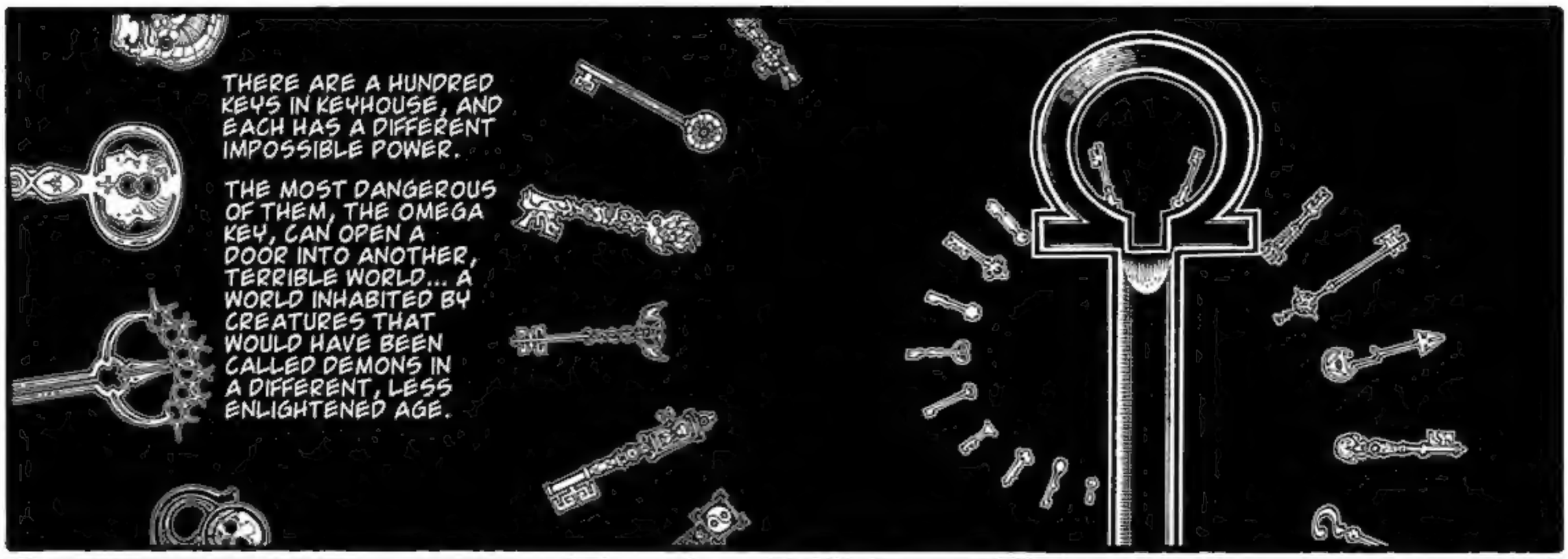
CLOCKWORKS

LOCKE & KEY


THERE ARE A HUNDRED KEYS IN KEYHOUSE, AND EACH HAS A DIFFERENT IMPOSSIBLE POWER.
THE MOST DANGEROUS OF THEM, THE OMEGA KEY, CAN OPEN A DOOR INTO ANOTHER, TERRIBLE WORLD... A WORLD INHABITED BY CREATURES THAT WOULD HAVE BEEN CALLED DEMONS IN A DIFFERENT, LESS ENLIGHTENED AGE.

FOR TWO CENTURIES, THESE INCREDIBLE KEYS HAVE BEEN PROTECTED BY GENERATIONS OF THE LOCKE FAMILY.
TWENTY-FIVE YEARS AGO, RENDELL LOCKE AND HIS CLOSEST FRIENDS SHARED THE KEYS OUT AMONGST ONE ANOTHER, AND WERE BLESSED WITH MAGIC, WONDER, AND HAPPINESS.
BUT AS THE SAYING GOES, ALL GOOD THINGS MUST PASS. THEIR TIME TOGETHER—AND THEIR CHILDHOOD—IS VERY NEARLY OVER. WITH THE END OF HIGH SCHOOL ONLY WEEKS AWAY, RENDELL LOCKE SUGGESTS A FINAL, DARING ADVENTURE...

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NO, SERIOUSLY.

WALK ME THROUGH THIS, MAN. I THOUGHT OPENING THE BLACK DOOR WAS THE ONE BIG NO-NO.

ALMOST. *LOOKING* THROUGH THE BLACK DOOR IS THE ONE BIG NO-NO.

OPENING IT, THOUGH, SO THE THINGS ON THE OTHER SIDE CAN GET THROUGH... THAT MIGHT BE OKAY.

SO THERE ARE THESE THINGS ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE DOOR. LIKE BIG, SUPER-POWERED TAPEWORMS.

THEY'RE DRAWN TO OUR WORLD LIKE MOTHS TO A LIGHT. AND WE'RE DRAWN TO THEIRS—SAME WAY.

BUT WHEN HUMANS AND THE TAPEWORMS MEET ON THE THRESHOLD, THEY GET MIXED UP. THE TAPEWORMS CAN ATTACH THEMSELVES TO A PERSON'S SOUL, RIGHT?

OKAY. I VOTE NO.

HOW CAN YOU VOTE? HE ISN'T EVEN DONE TALKING.

HE LOST ME AT SOUL-TAPEWORM.

THING IS: AS LONG AS NONE OF US LOOK THROUGH THE DOOR, WE CAN'T BE SEDUCED ACROSS THE THRESHOLD.

WITH NO SPIRIT TO ATTACH TO, THE TAPEWORMS WHO CROSS INTO OUR WORLD JUST TURN INTO A HARMLESS METAL.

HARMLESS... BUT USEFUL. ALL OF THE SPECIAL KEYS IN KEYHOUSE ARE MADE OUT OF THAT STUFF. IT'S A KIND OF PSYCHIC METAL, AND CAN BE REWORKED TO BEND REALITY.

IF WE HAD SOME OF THAT METAL WE COULD MAKE OUR OWN KEY.

KEY FOR DOING WHAT?

THINK ABOUT HOW IT FELT, UP ON STAGE. THE WAY EVERYONE LOOKED AT US. THAT WAS A KIND OF MAGIC.

WHEN WE GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL, THE RIFFEL RULE KICKS IN AND WE'LL FORGET ABOUT THE POWER OF THE KEYS. WE'LL LEAVE MAGIC BEHIND.

BUT MAYBE WE CAN MAKE A KEY SO WE CAN CARRY A LITTLE MAGIC WITH US FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES.

WHAT IF WE USED A KEY TO CHANGE THE WAY PEOPLE SAW US? WHAT IF THEY *ALWAYS* LOOKED AT US THE WAY THEY LOOKED AT US WHEN WE WERE IN THE PLAY?

A GLAMOUR KEY.

RIFFEL RULE? WHAT'D I MISS?

HANS RIFFEL. HE WAS THE LAST PERSON TO USE THE WHISPERING IRON. HE MADE A KEY TO THE FRONT DOOR.

NO ONE WHO ENTERS THE FRONT DOOR OF THIS HOUSE AS AN ADULT CAN SEE THE POWER OF THE KEYS. NOT DIRECTLY. HE THOUGHT THAT WAS SAFEST. SOMETHING ABOUT KEEPING THE KEYS FROM BEING USED AS WEAPONS IN THE WAR.

IT'S FUNNY YOU SHOULD CALL IT THE GLAMOUR KEY. THAT'S ALSO ONE OF THE EARLIEST WORDS FOR MAGIC.

AND THAT'S WHAT IT WOULD DO. WRAP EACH OF US IN A PROTECTIVE GLAMOUR. IT WOULD MAKE PEOPLE WANT TO... LIKE US. THAT'S ALL.

I DON'T KNOW, RENDELL. ISN'T THAT CHEATING? AM I THE ONLY ONE WHO THINKS IT'S BETTER TO LET PEOPLE JUDGE YOU FOR WHO YOU ARE AND THE THINGS YOU DO?

I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, BUT... IT WAS ALSO CHEATING TO USE THE MAGIC OF THE KEYS TO BLOW PEOPLE AWAY WITH OUR PERFORMANCE.

I GUESS I WAS JUST THINKING THAT I WISH EVERYONE LOVED YOU GUYS LIKE I LOVE YOU GUYS.

WE SHOULD PUT IT TO A VOTE, THOUGH.

SO, WAIT? WE'D USE THIS KEY, AND PEOPLE WOULD, LIKE, BE ATTRACTED TO US?

"GLAMOUR" IS ALSO ONE OF THE EARLIEST WORDS FOR "*FUCKABLE.*"

IN. *IN.* I'M IN.

WHAT DO YOU SAY, COMPADRÉ?

USING A SPECIAL KEY TO MAKE MYSELF AWESOME WOULD BE REDUNDANT AND POINTLESS.

BUT I WOULD DEFINITELY LIKE TO SEE A DEMON TURN TO METAL.

YOU GUYS KNOW ME. MY SIMPLE MIND IS MALLEABLE. I'LL DO WHAT YOU WANT. WHAT SAY YOU, BABE?

YEAH, WHAT DO YOU SAY, BABE? DO YOU WANT TO BE LOVED WHEN PEOPLE LOOK AT YOU?

OKAY. LET'S DO IT.

IT'S SETTLED, THEN. IT'LL TAKE A FEW DAYS TO DRAIN THE LOWER LEVEL OF THE CAVES.

LET'S PLAN TO GO NEXT WEEKEND.

MARK? DO YOU HATE ME FOR BEING SUCH A WITCHY-BITCH?

DID BEV LEE REALLY LAUGH AT ME?

YESSSSS... BUT IT WAS AN I-LIKE-HIM-KIND-OF LAUGH. IT WAS MAYBE EVEN AN I-WANT-TO-GIVE-HIM-A-HANDJOB-KIND-OF LAUGH. YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY, LI'L BUDDY!

I NOTICE YOU DIDN'T ASK KIM FOR HER VOTE.

I'M NOT DOING IT FOR *HER*.

RIGHT NOW, I THINK KIM WILL PROBABLY BREAK UP WITH ME AFTER PROM. I KNOW SHE CARES ABOUT ME. BUT I'M GOING TO BEREKLEY AND SHE'S GOING TO SMITH.

SHE ISN'T GOING TO KEEP SOME KIND OF SILLY LONG-DISTANCE THING GOING.

WOULD THAT BE SO BAD? FOR BOTH OF YOU TO TRY SEEING... DIFFERENT PEOPLE? SOMETIME?

THAT'S SENSIBLE. BUT THERE'S NOTHING SENSIBLE ABOUT WHAT I FEEL WHEN I LOOK AT HER.

I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT HER. THE WAY SHE FIGHTS FOR HER FRIENDS. HOW UNAFRAID SHE IS.

I MEAN, SHE CAN BE CRUEL SOMETIMES, BUT... SHE'D DIE FOR ANY OF US. SHE REALLY WOULD. I'VE NEVER MET ANYONE MORE COURAGEOUS.

AND SHE'S GOT THAT LAUGH AND... AND PERFECT SKIN...

YOU'VE NEVER BEEN IN LOVE, ERIN.

IT'S HARD FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND WHEN YOU'D DO *ANYTHING* FOR SOMEONE.

I UNDERSTAND.

WHERE ARE YOU GUYS GOING, RENDELL?

NOWHERE. GO WATCH TV, DUNCAN.

FLOWERS! FOR YOU! ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING THIS AFTERNOON, DEAR SIR!

DUNCAN? PLEASE CHANGE BACK TO A BOY. SOMEONE'S GOING TO SEE YOU AND THINK YOU'RE A *FAG!*

IGNORE THE CREEP, DUNK. YOU MAKE A DARLIN' FLOWER GIRL, SWEETIE.

HEY! HEY, *KIM!* IF YOU TELL ME WHERE YOU'RE GOING THIS AFTERNOON, I'LL SHOW YOU MY SECRET TREE HIDEOUT AND MY SQUIRREL SQUADRON!

HOW ABOUT YOU MIND YOUR OWN BUSINESS, YOU GRUBBY LITTLE SNOOP?

(TANG!)

LOOK... *BUDDY*... IF IT WAS UP TO ME, YOU'D BE COMING ALONG WITH US. BUT YOUR BROTHER IS PROBABLY RIGHT. THE DROWNING CAVE IS NO PLACE TO—

YOU'RE GOING DOWN INTO THE CAVE?!

NICE ONE, DODGE.

I DON'T WANT YOU ALONG, DUNK. DAD WOULD KILL ME IF I TOOK YOU WHERE WE'RE GOING.

I'LL BE CAREFUL, I WILL, REALLY!

THERE'S NO WAY. *NO WAY*. NOW YOU EITHER WALK BACK, OR I KICK YOUR ASS BACK. YOUR CHOICE.

WHY ARE WE BRINGING ALL OUR GEAR... THE CROWN, THE ANGEL WINGS, THE HERCULES KEY?

BETTER SAFE THAN SORRY. I'VE NEVER DRAINED THE CAVES BEFORE. I'VE NEVER BEEN TO THE BLACK DOOR. I'VE ONLY EVER SEEN IT WITH THE TIMESHIFT KEY.

I DON'T EXACTLY KNOW WHAT WE'RE GETTING INTO.

THE TIMESHIFT KEY. HAVEN'T FOOLED WITH THAT ONE IN A WHILE.

YOU EVER WONDER ABOUT PEOPLE FROM THE FUTURE USING THAT KEY AND LOOKING BACK AT US? FOR ALL YOU KNOW, YOUR OWN KIDS ARE WATCHING YOU RIGHT THIS MOMENT!

FUCK. NO. THAT'S TERRIBLE!

KIDS, IF YOU'RE HERE WITH ME NOW— DON'T DO *ANY* OF THE SHIT YOU SEE ME DOING. TRY AND LEARN FROM MY MISTAKES. ALL I ASK.

YOU DORK!

LET'S DO IT, THEN.

AND TRY NOT TO THINK ABOUT THE FACT THAT WE'RE ALREADY ABOUT TWENTY FEET BELOW SEA LEVEL.

HEY, GUYS... WE'VE GOT COMPANY.

WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING? I TOLD YOU I DON'T WANT YOU ALONG.

GO HOME, DUNCAN.

PISS THE *FUCK* OFF.

EAST BATTERY 13
LVCRAFT STATION
US GVMNT PERSONNEL ONLY

BUT—WHAT'S DOWN HERE? WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO LOOK AT?

NONE OF YOUR BUSINESS, *RETARD.*

GIVE THE LITTLE GUY A BREAK. HE'S CURIOUS.

HE'S GOING TO FUCK THINGS UP. IT'S WHAT HE ALWAYS DOES!

I GOT THIS. CHILL.

TAKE IT FROM YOUR BUDDY, DODGE. IT WOULDN'T BE FUN IF SOMETHING HAPPENED TO YOU. HEAD ON BACK, OKAY?

OH, AND HEY, IF ANYONE ASKS WHERE WE WENT, FORGET YOU SAW US HERE, OKAY?

BUT WHAT ARE YOU DOING? AT LEAST TELL ME THAT!

IF YOU DON'T WANT ME TO TELL DAD YOU GUYS WENT IN THE CAVE, YOU NEED TO AT LEAST SAY WHAT YOU'RE DOING DOWN THERE.

I'LL RUN AND GO GET DAD RIGHT NOW.

NOW DARN IT KID, THAT'S JUST NOT FAIR.

TELL. TELL AND I PROMISE— I *PROMISE*—I WON'T WALK BACK DOWN THOSE STEPS AFTER YOU.

OKAY. BUT YOU LISTEN UP, BUDDY. PROMISES ARE *IMPORTANT*.

YOU MAKE A PROMISE, YOU HAVE TO KEEP IT, NO MATTER WHAT. THAT'S HOW WE CAN TELL THE BAD GUYS FROM THE GOOD GUYS.

THE GOOD GUYS *ALWAYS* KEEP THEIR PROMISES.

I PROMISE. WITH ALL MY HEART.

I WILL NOT WALK DOWN THOSE STEPS INTO THE DROWNING CAVE AGAIN FOR THE REST OF THE DAY.

SO THE KEYS ARE MADE OUT OF THIS STUFF CALLED THE WHISPERING IRON, RIGHT?

BUT HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHERE THE WHISPERING IRON COMES FROM?

WE'RE ALL SET.

I FORCED A PROMISE OUT OF HIM. HE WON'T BE COMING BACK THROUGH THERE TODAY.

WOW. I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT. DUNCAN IS EVEN MORE STUBBORN THAN RENDELL. HONESTLY, I'M SURPRISED HE GAVE UP.

YOU KNOW WHAT'S REALLY ANNOYING? THE HOUSE ALWAYS SHOWS DUNCAN THE KEYS.

LIKE SOMEHOW THEY'RE SAFER WITH HIM. A DUMBASS NINE-YEAR-OLD WHO DOESN'T LISTEN TO ANYONE!

SERIOUSLY. LIKE A NINE-YEAR-OLD KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT RESPONSIBILITY.

WHY IS THAT, ANYWAY? WHY DOES DUNCAN ALWAYS FIND THE KEYS?

5

IT'S ANOTHER SAFETY MECHANISM THAT GOES BACK TO HANS RIFFEL AND THE WAR.

THE HOUSE HAS A WAY OF PICKING A KID TO SHOW THE KEYS TO. SOMEONE WITH... NO MALICE IN THEM. WHOEVER IS LEAST LIKELY TO DO HARM TO ANOTHER.

I'VE BEEN COMING TO THE HOUSE SINCE JUST ABOUT FOREVER, AND I'VE NEVER FOUND ONE KEY. I DON'T REALLY THINK OF MYSELF AS LOADED WITH MALICE.

3

EXCEPT TOWARD YOUR MOTHER.

OH. YEAH. SOMEDAY I'M TOTALLY GONNA MURDER THAT BITCH.

HEH. IF I DON'T DO IT FOR YOU.

I HATE IT DOWN HERE. WHY DO THEY ALWAYS HAVE THE END-OF-THE-YEAR KEG PARTY DOWN HERE?

LOTS OF NOOKS AND CRANNIES TO MAKE OUT IN. OR, IN MY CASE, SPY ON HOT CHICKS MAKING OUT WITH OTHER GUYS WITHOUT FEAR OF BEING NOTICED.

1

I'D RATHER MAKE OUT IN A COFFIN. AT LEAST IT WOULD BE DRY.

I KEEP EXPECTING ONE OF THESE DOORS TO POP OPEN AND SOMETHING TO LEAP OUT AT ME.

1

IT WORKED. THIS WAS ALL UNDERWATER TWO DAYS AGO. I CAME IN AS A GHOST AND CHECKED IT OUT.

I THINK WE'RE SAFE TO GO ON.

BE CAREFUL, YOU GUYS! JUST ONE AT A TIME ON THE STEPS. THEY'RE LOOKING PRETTY CORRODED.

CHO? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

ONE WAY OR ANOTHER—THIS HAS BEEN THE BEST YEAR OF MY LIFE. BECAUSE OF YOU GUYS.

HEY—STICK "DODGE" IN THERE AS MY MIDDLE NAME. FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, THAT'S MY REAL NAME.

BECAUSE IT'S YOUR NAME FOR ME.

KEEPERS OF THE KEYS-

TAMERS OF THE TEMPEST

RENDELL LOCKE

ERIN VOSS

KIM TOPHER

ELLIE WHEDON

MARK CHO

LUKE "DODGE" CARAVAGGIO

FRIENDS FOR

1988

WHY'D YOU PUT *MY* NAME AFTER RENDELL'S? I MEAN, HE'S IN LOVE WITH KIM, RIGHT?

I WASN'T THINKING ABOUT WHO *HE'S* IN LOVE WITH.

UH-OH.

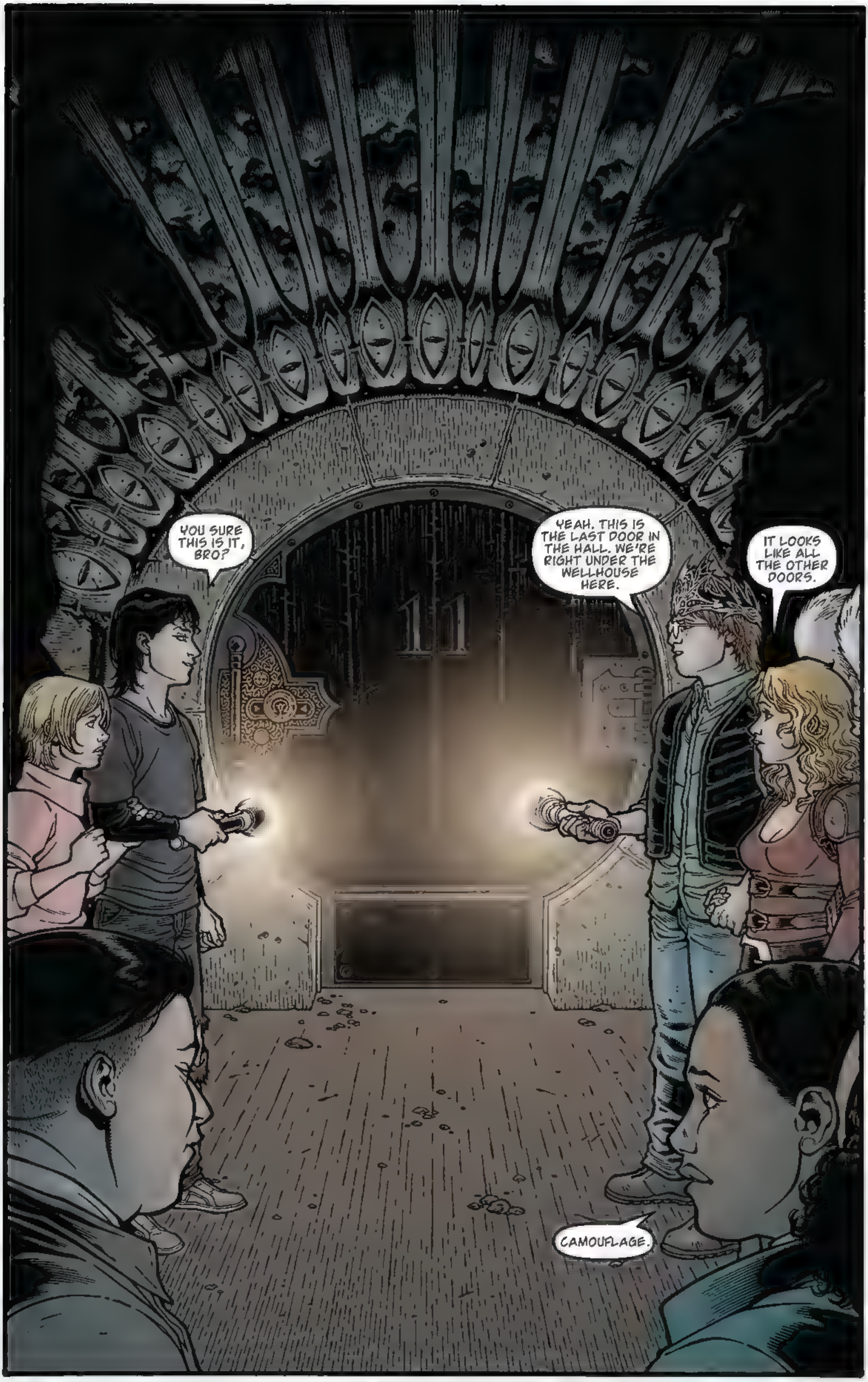
DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. THE SHADOWS CAN CLEAR US A PATH.

YOU! AND YOU! HEY! STOP SULKING AROUND AND DO SOMETHING. MOVE THAT STUFF OUT OF THE WAY. UM. PLEASE.

HOW MUCH FURTHER?

NOT MUCH.

I THINK THIS IS IT.


YOU SURE THIS IS IT, BRO?
YEAH. THIS IS THE LAST DOOR IN THE HALL. WE'RE RIGHT UNDER THE WELLHOUSE HERE.
IT LOOKS LIKE ALL THE OTHER DOORS.
CAMOUFLAGE.

NO. *BETTER* THAN CAMOFLAUGE. SO THE OMEGA KEY WAS THE FIRST KEY MADE OUT OF THE WHISPERING IRON.

WHEN BENJAMIN LOCKE DESIGNED IT, THOUGH, HE DIDN'T REALIZE WHAT IT WOULD DO. HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE KIND OF POWER THE KEYS HOLD.

HE JUST WANTED SOMETHING TO KEEP THE DEMONS OUT OF OUR WORLD. TO MAKE THEM GO AWAY. WELL. THE KEYS DO WHAT THEY'RE DESIGNED TO DO. ALWAYS.

"ORIGINALLY, THE BLACK DOOR WAS HELD SHUT WITH A PADLOCK. LATER, BEN DECIDED TO MODIFY IT FOR GREATER SAFETY, AND HE EMBEDDED THE LOCK IN THE DOOR ITSELF.

"AROUND THE SAME TIME, HE MADE A FEW SPARE KEYS, OUT OF ORDINARY METAL. BUT WHEN HE TESTED THEM, HE DISCOVERED SOMETHING INCREDIBLE.

"IF YOU USE ANY KEY, ***BESIDES THE OMEGA KEY***, TO OPEN THIS DOOR...

"...IT JUST OPENS INTO MORE CAVE. THAT OTHER WORLD DISAPPEARS COMPLETELY. LIKE IT NEVER WAS.

"ONLY THE OMEGA KEY CAN OPEN THE PASSAGEWAY INTO SOUL-TAPEWORM CITY.

NT

EXPLOSIVE

"HELL, THEY USED THIS SPACE FOR STORAGE DURING WORLD WAR II, BACK WHEN ALL THESE CAVES OPERATED AS A PLACE TO WATCH FOR GERMAN SUBS.

"THEY HAD ***NO IDEA*** THERE WAS ANYTHING SPECIAL ABOUT THIS DOOR."

TO TELL THE TRUTH, I THINK MAYBE BEN WANTED TO GET RID OF THE OMEGA KEY COMPLETELY AFTER THAT. GOOD RIDDANCE, RIGHT?

BUT HE DIDN'T GET RID OF IT.

NO. NOT ONCE HE UNDERSTOOD THE WHISPERING IRON COULD BE USED TO UNLOCK THE IMPOSSIBLE.

THEY WERE FIGHTING A WAR. THE WHISPERING IRON GAVE THE YANKEES A CRUCIAL ADVANTAGE AGAINST A VASTLY SUPERIOR ARMY. THEY WEREN'T ABOUT TO GIVE UP THEIR SOURCE OF THE STUFF.

BEN LOCKE WAS AS GOOD A MAN AS THEY COME... BUT THERE ISN'T ANYONE IN A DESPERATE SITUATION WHO CAN WALK AWAY FROM THIS KIND OF TEMPTATION. YOU KNOW?

ALL RIGHT. WHEN THE BLACK DOOR IS OPEN, IT'S... HYPNOTIC. IT'S HARD TO RESIST STEPPING INSIDE. EVERYONE GET CLEAR.

YOU TOO, DODGE.

FUCK THAT, MAN. YOU'RE NOT DOING THIS ALONE.

I'LL KEEP MY EYES POINTED BACK DOWN THE PASSAGEWAY AND MY HAND ON YOUR ARM. THAT WAY, IF YOU CATCH A GLANCE, I CAN HOLD YOU BACK, KEEP YOU FROM GOING IN THERE.

NOTHING IS GOING TO HAPPEN. NONE OF US ARE GOING TO LOOK.

I FEEL SICK.

OH. OH!

AW, FUCK, DUNCAN, WHAT ARE YOU DOING— YOU PROMISED, KID, YOU FUCKING PROMISED!

DODGE? WHAT? WHAT DID YOU SAY ABOUT DUNCAN?

WHAT THE FUUUUUUCK IS—?

LOOK AT IT. IT'S SO—SO GOOD. SO GOOD.

NO, KID, PLEASE— YOU HAVE TO—UNH.

AW. AW, MAN.

DODGE? WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING?

Clockworks ~ Chapter Four
The Whispering Iron

Storytellers - **Gabriel Rodríguez** & **Joe Hill**

Colored by **Jay Fotos** - Lettered by **Robbie Robbins** - Edited by **Chris Ryall**

Locke & Key created by Joe Hill & Gabriel Rodríguez

CLOCKWORKS

LOCKE & KEY

NEXT MONTH #5